



House of Commons Debates

FOURTH SESSION—SIXTH PARLIAMENT.

SPEECHES OF HON. EDWARD BLAKE, M.P.,

ON

SAWDUST IN RIVERS.

TUESDAY, 29TH APRIL, 1890.

Mr. BLAKE. I agree with a good deal of what has been said by the hon. member who has just taken his seat (Mr. Ives). I think some confusion exists as to the matter, because it has been apparently considered that a proceeding which is based on the one statute is to be dependent in part on the provisions of another statute. The truth is, the proposed legislation which has been discussed, and which would relieve the hon. the Minister from the invidious distinction with which he is at present invested by making the rule cast iron, is legislation which, as I understand it, would apply only to one set of difficulties, namely, to the difficulties arising from navigation. But the Fishery Act is another statute, with another set of prohibitions, and it also reserves its own exemption power to the Minister; and, therefore, the proceedings in this case, as I understood them, having been taken only under the Act with respect to navigable rivers, it is beside the question to attempt to discuss whether these proceedings are justifiable under the Fishery Act, or upon the ground, for instance, of injury to the fisheries. I call the attention of the Minister to the fact that so long as it is attempted to justify the enforcement of these prohibitions by reference to the fishing interests the proposed legislation as to navigation will be of no consequence, because the Act, which it is proposed to amend, does not authorise any prohibition whatever in consequence of the fishing interests. It deals solely with the interests of navigation; it is the other statute that deals with the prohibition as to the fishing interests, and that statute must be dealt with in order to alter, if it is thought desirable to alter, its provisions as to exemption. There was a great deal of good sense in what the hon. member who has just taken his seat (Mr. Ives) said in respect to the relative importance of the conflicting interests. I happen to know Mr. Davison, who is an old friend of mine, and early in this Session I was put in possession of the papers in this case, and I expected I would have had an opportunity of dealing with it when the Bill of the Minister of Marine and Fisheries was brought up. Since that time my recollection of the facts has somewhat faded away, and I am not able to speak as clearly as I had hoped to speak, on this unexpected occasion. So far as I can remember, whether

the diminution in the quantity of fish was due to the sawdust or no, it seems to me to be ridiculous to compare for an instant the existing condition of the fishing interests on the LaHave and the existing condition of the lumbering interests on that river; for the lumbering interests as regards the mill owners, the employes, and the public are of such importance that the action of the law on the ground of the relatively insignificant fishing interests should not prevail. I agree with the hon. member (Mr. Ives) that, as regards navigable rivers, the interests of navigation are of much higher importance and require much more careful consideration. I read the evidence on this subject also. There was no doubt some evidence that sawdust had accumulated in some parts of the river. There was no doubt evidence that the channel had been to some extent narrowed, I should judge; but I did not find, taking the whole evidence, that the navigation of the River LaHave such as it is, and such as I should judge it is likely to be, is being at this time substantially impeded, for the uses to which it is put, by the condition of affairs which had been produced by the sawdust; nor did I find from the evidence that there had been, of late years at all events, any great impairment of the condition. It is perfectly obvious that the effect of sawdust will depend very much on the character of the stream. As the hon. Minister of Justice has said, if we deal with rapidly running rivers, having great descent and without sinuosities, no doubt the sawdust will get away. If, however, the river is somewhat sluggish, and particularly when it is a tidal river with deep bays and eddies, there are abundant points on which the sawdust will be deposited, for I cannot agree with the hon. member for Charlotte (Mr. Gillmor), that the sawdust keeps floating all the time; but there may be considerable deposits of sawdust in these bays and deep spots, and yet the average depth of the river may be maintained. There is, of course, no object, for purposes of navigation, in having deep holes in a river. The depth of the channel of a river is its depth at its shallowest point. So if the sawdust simply fills up the holes and leave the navigable channel free, of course no damage is done to navigation. The general impression I drew from the evidence was this, and I state it after the speeches

delivered by the two Ministers, that there was no great public interest imperilled by the continuance at the present time of the state of things which has been continuing for some time, while it would appear that very serious inconvenience would result, even if the destruction of the entire lumbering business would not result, from a severe course being taken in this regard. All I ask now is, that as we have not had an opportunity of fully discussing this question, which we had reason to expect would be given to us by the Government Bill on the paper standing in the name of the Minister of Marine, which, we understand, will not now be proceeded with, there shall be given a very careful reconsideration of the condition of affairs with respect to these rivers on which the hon. the Minister is at present enforcing the prohibition; and that unless it be made upon that reconsideration absolutely plain that such an important interest as the navigation interest is about to be seriously interfered with by the continuation of the system, a stay of these vigorous proceedings should take place in the instance which has given rise to this discussion.

ORDNANCE LANDS.

MR. BLAKE. I think I know something about the claim. The claim arose out of the stipulation of the original cession, which was partly statutory, of this land along the canal by which it was alleged to be on the condition that there should be no buildings erected on it, and that it should be for the use of the canal only, and there is an allegation that there has been a forfeiture of the allegation by the erection of buildings. I think those buildings were erected by squatters. It would be important to know how much of this is for law costs, and how much for commission on sale of lands, and who is the seller of the lands and what is the rate of commission?

MR. BLAKE. Is there not a question as to the deposit on the Logan farm, which the auctioneer retained.

MR. BLAKE. What are we giving commission for if the auctioneer retains the \$7,000 or \$8,000?

MR. BLAKE. I think the claim, however, extends to a portion that surrounds the bywash as well as to the other portion.

THE RAILWAY QUESTION.

MR. BLAKE. My hon. friend from North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) must remember that the policy of the Government according to a statement made by a very important member of the Government before the last election, so far from parting with these Government railways in the Maritime Provinces, was to increase them by the purchase of the properties of private corporations, in order as Sir Charles Tupper said in a telegram which I read to the House, that they might both be run with greater economy and with greater advantage to the public service. It is true, that policy has not yet been effected; but we have no doubt whatever that although Sir Charles is no longer there, his spirit still prevails, and that within a reasonable time, before the next election, the telegram will again materialise.

MR. BLAKE. Proposals of this kind have accomplished certain ends on former occasions. There was a former occasion when this subject was brought forward, not on the suggestion of a simple candidate for a county, no matter how im-

portant he might be, but on the formal representation of the most important man in the Ministry next to the Prime Minister. It was on the 11th of February, 1887, that Sir Charles Tupper telegraphed to the present hon. member, then the candidate actively canvassing for Albert (Mr. Weldon), as follows:—

"I intend to submit to my colleagues a proposal to consolidate the branch railways with main line, by which greater economy in administration will be effected, and much greater utility to the country secured."

Think of it! The Minister who had been in charge of the Department of Railways for a long time, and who was then, I think, Minister of Finance, and who therefore had a long experience in the two Departments which most specially fitted him to deal with a matter of this kind—his experience in the Department of Railways having given him a knowledge of the requirements of the railways of the country, and his knowledge of the Finance Department having instructed him in regard to the attention to be paid to the finances of the country—that Minister, with all that experience, and with all that influence, had come—it is true at a late period, it is true at a critical period, it is true at a period which perhaps did not fit him for calm consideration of all the fiscal and economical questions which were involved, at a period when his judgment might perhaps, to a certain extent, be obscured by other and political considerations had come—to this conclusion, that the consolidation of the branch railways with the main line of the Intercolonial would at once effect greater economy in the administration of the whole and much greater utility to the country; and he had also come to the conclusion that it was his duty to submit to his colleagues a proposition to accomplish that result. He obtained from the people that measure of power which he desired the Administration to secure—whether by these or similar devices it is not material now to consider—but he came to this Parliament backed by my hon. friends opposite, many of whom, no doubt, received telegrams, the hon. member for Albert (Mr. Weldon) amongst them. I cannot doubt that Sir Charles Tupper submitted that proposal to the Government. I cannot doubt that the member for Albert pressed upon him to press upon them that the proposal should be carried out. I cannot doubt that Sir Charles Tupper did it—he could—and who could do more?—to bring about the redemption of the promise which had so successfully redeemed the County of Albert.

MR. BLAKE. He had not time enough! He left his office and the country, and the hon. member for Albert (Mr. Weldon) tells us that for four years he has been laboring in that field which Sir Charles Tupper deserted.

MR. BLAKE. Well, for three years. I recommend the hon. member for Albert, who now for the first time brings this matter before Parliament, to continue laboring, with the assurance that it will not be until the time, or about the time shortly preceding the general election, that he may expect to reap a harvest as the result of his labors. I do not suppose that he will be now contented; I hardly expect that the electors of Albert will next time be contented with another telegram, but this time he may possibly hope to get an Order in Council providing for a future consolidation of these railways to be effected if the next elections go right.

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